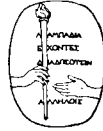


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GLORY

BY GRACE SARTWELL MASON

UNDER the drifting gold and scarlet of the autumn afternoon we all started toward the Square. There was a certain expectancy that touched every face turned toward the center of the town, an expectancy which differed subtly from the mere curiosity of other community occasions. For on this afternoon we were to witness the unveiling of a bronze tablet let into a great granite boulder in the Square, and on this tablet we were to read the names of those of our boys who had gone to the war. There were to be, we had been told, gold stars after the names of those who had never come back. And so, mingled with our expectancy there was something of elation, of solemnity, a touch of exaltation.

None of us cared to be late for that fine moment. Some of our most impeccable housewives had even left their dinner dishes unwashed and standing in the sink covered decently with a dish towel, and there was much calling from sidewalk to verandas as one and another of us warned our friends that the band had begun to play and the procession of school children and G. A. R. veterans was forming in front of the schoolhouse. Grandma Colt had long since been trundled past in her wheel chair, sitting up-

right, doing all the pushing, as her devoted, but sometimes tried, Samuel often said. Men from the logging camp had gone past, teetering on spiked heels. Small cars in clouds of dust had bounced past—a car from nearly every farm, for we are a prosperous valley. In our way of saying, people came from 'way up the creeks, from the Haines District, from Mercer Township, and from across the river. There was scarcely a fold of the hills that had not sent forth a human being or two that afternoon.

There is a band stand in the center of our Square, its jig-saw architecture somewhat ameliorated with vines and hanging baskets. Some merciful lack of initiative or of funds has kept us from spoiling our Square with paths or benches, shrubbery or fountains. And so it is very simple—a neat, sweet, green-velvet handkerchief of a Square with maples on four sides of it hiding the shops somewhat, and the hills looking down on it benignantly, fold on fold.

And now, near the center of it, is the fine rugged old boulder brought down by two teams from Bear Mountain, and on the boulder we were to see a bronze plate, thickly inscribed with little names that are so big in our hearts. The trampled grass sent up its incense of fra-

grance most poignant, the maples flung out their shimmering banners, the band could be heard coming around the corner of Main and Willow streets.

"Doctor Willie will never make it if he don't hurry," worried Mis' Anderson, at my elbow. "He's just druv past toward home, an' they say the parade's started from the church."

We crane our necks after the swiftly retreating back of Doctor Willie's car. We see it come to a skillful stop in front of his father's house. Doctor Willie steps out unhurriedly, takes his medicine case into the house, probably jots down a few orderly notes, comes out again at exactly the right moment to step into his place in the procession. We all draw a breath of relief. It would not be right or seemly to have the unveiling without Doctor Willie, we all feel. He is our one major. Besides, he was one of the first of our boys to volunteer, and the last to come back.

"There's Doctor Willie's mother. How do, Mis' Merle?" I heard Mis' Anderson again, and she added, "It's a proud day for Mis' Doc Merle."

I felt my other elbow pinched by Letha Doane. Letha, our best-educated spinster, is Puck turned a bit sardonic. "I see Doctor Willie's mother, all right," she murmured. "But where is his father?"

"Old Doc's in the drug store, settin' as usual," supplied the all-seeing Mis' Anderson. "I saw him when I come by. He hadn't changed his coat or anything."

She leaned across me with a pecking motion of her small head to address the inscrutably smiling Letha. "It's a mercy we ain't all dependent on Old Doc any longer. I never drew a comfortable breath while Doctor Willie was away, for fear something would break out on us. Of course, Old Doc was all right when he was younger, but Doctor Willie has had such a grand education."

"Paid for by Old Doc," Letha murmured.

I left them unobtrusively, for I wished

to look across the Square over the heads of the throng from the higher level of the sidewalk. The only bit of open space in the Square was the circle about the flag-draped boulder. On the temporary platform the speakers sat, their feet disposed gingerly among the potted geraniums. The procession was turning into the Square, through a lane kept open by diligent Boy Scouts, the school children, with arms full of glowing autumn flowers, our half dozen old veterans in the place of honor, and last our young veterans of the A. E. F. One or two of them were in fairly complete uniform; some of them wore their service hats and civilian clothes. Doctor Willie marched as he had stepped from his car, in the spotless, well cut, carefully pressed business suit we were accustomed to see at our bedsides accompanied by a fine black-leather medicine case.

Indeed, although Doctor Willie's straight back showed his military training, it was difficult to believe that he was not on his way to a case. His good-looking face wore the same earnest, tight-lipped expression we were accustomed to seeing there as he drove past our windows on his way to a double-pneumonia case, or a crushed arm in the logging camp. He did not even wear the medal he had received for his feats of surgery under fire in France. One half-expected him to break away from the column as soon as he had decently seen it to the speakers' stand, in order to go back to his consulting room.

I was glad for his mother's sake that he did nothing of the sort, for, as the procession formed its circle about the boulder and the speakers' stand, and the voice of the first speaker began to swing into the good old oratorical phrases, I had a glimpse of her face, usually an empty assembly of small, neat features, but now glorified as she gazed at her son. With that glimpse something clutched at my heart, as if the face of Doctor Willie's mother had told me a little of the unutterable pride and thanksgiving there were in the



GRANDMA COLT HAD BEEN TRUNDLED PAST IN HER WHEEL CHAIR

souls of all the mothers who craned their necks to gaze at one particular face in that circle; and the aching stillness in the hearts of those who had only a gold-starred name on a bronze tablet to look at.

I found that even the tall, broad-shouldered figure of Doctor Willie standing at attention was beginning to blur a bit, and so I eased my heart by letting my gaze wander under the maples and across the street. It was then that I saw that Old Doc had come out of the drug store, and was standing on the top step, gazing from under his shaggy, grizzled brows across the Square. He, too, was looking at Doctor Willie, his only son.

With one hand in the pocket of his sagging old coat and the thumb and fore-

finger of the other in the pocket of his vest, with his shoulders sagging forward, there was nothing unusual in Old Doc's attitude. It was the expression of his face that was different. I knew that none of us had ever really seen Old Doc's face before. It had been hidden from us by his twinkle, by a scraggly growth of whisker, by the friendliness of his smile, sometimes by casual splashes of mud kicked up by the heels of his gray mare. But now these external facts seemed for the instant to have dropped away. In Old Doc's face there was but one thing—a loneliness so keen, so stark, that I turned my eyes away for fear he might know I had seen it.

Doctor Merle's Willie had barely entered high school when he announced

that he was going to be a doctor—and a crackerjack doctor, too. His father heard the pronouncement of this ambition with curiously mixed emotions. He was tremendously pleased and queerly dismayed. His own father had been a country practitioner and a surgeon of

Willie's being his. Naturally he wanted nothing but the very best for Willie. He had never had much ambition for himself, but for Willie he longed for some vague splendor to which his boy could attain without paying the price of self-sacrifice, disillusion, and pain. In his

own work he had never found any splendor, although there had been often enough self-sacrifice, disillusion, and pain.

It wasn't that Dr. William Merle did not revere the profession of his father. He had imagination and he saw all its glories. In the theory of medicine he felt the profoundest interest, but when he came to its practice some quality in him of humanness, perhaps of softness, winced and hung back in dread. He never became used to pain. The very quickness of his imagination added to the weight of the responsibilities every doctor carries with him night and day. Perhaps his sense of humor was a handicap. A bedside manner was completely beyond him; his in-



"THINK THEY NEED YOU, SON?"

some repute. It was satisfying in a fine sort of way to have Willie voluntarily choose the profession of his father and his grandfather. But—

Willie was the only child of Doctor Merle's middle age. Perhaps for that reason there was something more of adoration, of tenderness, of deep concern in his father's heart for him than is usual. He never quite got over the miracle of

formality often affronted patients who liked their money's worth of mystery and authority. To collect a bill for having brought the child of a friend through the quinsy made him almost as uncomfortable as the child's suffering had done. The fee-fo-fum of the profession was impossible for anyone with so much humorous geniality as was inborn in William Merle.

And so there came to be a general tendency unconsciously to underrate Doctor William. This never prevented anyone dangerously ill from sending hotfoot for him, for, although the fact was never commented on and probably was never appreciated, Doctor William lost almost no cases that had a possibility of being saved. Somewhere hidden in his rather slow-moving brain was a sort of shrewd gift of diagnosis, probably

inherited, and in his muscular, slender-tipped fingers a skill that might have made of him a great surgeon if he had been born in different circumstances, a bit harder, with the yeast of ambition in him, less compassionate, more self-centered.

But because he liked to sit down by the kitchen stove and talk with us about chrysanthemums and horses and the latest droll saying of old lady Waters,



HE DROVE WITH A WILD, IF SOMEWHAT SHAKING HAND

and because his coats sagged eternally at the pockets from a weight of seed corn, or dahlia roots, or apples, or a shoe he was taking to be half-soled, or a thumbed volume of Walt Whitman, and because he never used long words or looked at us through strange instruments of investigation, we seldom saw the wonders he occasionally accomplished, and we should no more have remembered to laud him than we should have hung a wreath about the neck of old dog Tray when he brought the cows home at night.

Ah no! We saved our words of wondering praise for young Doctor Willie when he blossomed forth among us at last, for in due course he became, just as he said that he would, a crackerjack doctor and surgeon. His father had never voiced that moment of hesitation, of sadness, he had when Willie announced his choice of work. He had looked out of the window of the small room called, in the old-fashioned way, the surgery, at the corner of the Square, as if he were considering, probably for the first time and the last, exactly what laurels the town had thus far bestowed upon him. Then, with a smile that was the least bit bleak, he said:

"Well, Willie, if you feel called upon to be a doctor, don't be one like me."

And fourteen-year-old Willie had replied, candidly: "Oh no! I'm going to be one of the best doctors in the world, and I shall have a new medicine case and no mud on my coat. And I shall charge 'em more than you do and never let 'em talk back to me."

"My boy, you're made!" Doctor William grinned.

From that day on a certain element of grimness entered into the life of Doctor William, for there had to be put by the money for Willie's education, and money was none too easy to come upon in that small town of frugal habits and small incomes. Doctor William had to accept cases from far outside our valley, and he had to become good at collecting what was due him, which he hated.

There was a younger doctor, but he

was never a serious rival, for we preferred not to lean too hard upon his mildness. He was a homœopath, and we considered tasteless medicine too whimsical to be taken seriously, so that for twelve or fourteen years Doctor William really carried the burden of our physical destinies upon his shoulders. At any hour of the day or night his gray mare could be seen plowing through dust or mud or snow from Bound Brook to the farthestmost folds of the wild valleys beyond Bear Mountain. He brought into the world four-fifths of our children, and this in spite of the fact that something in him rebelled and shuddered away from each case of this sort.

"You stay right here," he was reputed to have said to one husband on an occasion of this sort. "If your wife and I are going to take a little jaunt through hell you can stick along, I guess."

If the thought ever crossed his mind through the crowded years while he was earning the money to send Willie to college and medical school that, if it weren't for this necessity, he could take life a bit easier, cultivate his strawberries and chrysanthemums, and have time for a pipe and Walt Whitman on the back porch, he was scarcely conscious of it, for, after all, these were rich years and it was a good fight he was fighting.

It was, as Mis' Anderson averred, a grand education that Willie received, with a year of post-graduate work and another year in a famous hospital. It took a deal of money, but Doctor William managed it somehow. And the day that Willie came home with his degrees and his diplomas, his up-to-the minute library, his new, gilt-edged knowledge, his new surgical instruments, his level-eyed, tight-lipped confidence in himself—that day repaid Old Doc for fourteen years of overwork.

In speaking of that day I unconsciously wrote "Old Doc," for such he became, almost from the moment Willie alighted from the train. This title meant no especial disrespect on our part. It was necessary to distinguish him in



OLD DOC BENT OVER THE BED

conversation from young Doctor. But popular titles have a way sometimes of going beneath the surface, and perhaps Doctor William did indeed begin to grow old from the day Willie became his partner.

Not that it was Willie's fault, exactly. Perhaps it was the contrast between them that made us all begin to see quite soon a number of Old Doc's shortcomings. Old Doc never bought a new suit until his wife had fairly to herd him into the tailor shop, and when he bought it he put it on and forgot it. Very soon it became molded to his large, shambling figure, and its pockets stretched themselves to accommodate the objects he crammed into them. His black string tie was generally waving in the breeze. In summer he wore an ancient "duster" of linen, and in winter a woolly overcoat of great age. His soft, black-felt hats were dispirited things, being used some-

times to flick dust off the top of his medicine case and again to stop a draught under the surgery window. When he was telling one of his funny stories he was likely to use the hat to whack the listener on the back when the laugh arrived.

But Willie's appearance was impeccable. He had many suits of good cloth, and there was always one of them under the pressing irons. When he bent over a sick bed his linen gave out a newly laundered fragrance. His finger nails sent some of our girls straight to the drug store for new orange-wood sticks and pink paste.

But, over and above clothes, there were other differences. Doctor Willie had the most perfect bedside manner any of us had ever relaxed under. He was probably born with it—a combination of godlike self-confidence, sternness, serene mystery, and a tincture of cool sympa-

thy. You could not imagine Willie sitting down by the kitchen stove, peeling and eating slices of apple with a jack-knife, while he discussed your lumbago. You could not imagine him coming at ten in the evening when he had promised to be there at six. You could not imagine him feeling as much interest in your small daily affairs as in your blood pressure.

Ah no! Willie was every inch a doctor, while Old Doc—well, he was something more. Probably it was rather early in their partnership that he felt the difference between himself and his son. There was one case they had together—a distressing, perilous operation on a woman whose cookie crock Willie had often helped to empty when he was a child,

whose children Willie's father had assisted into the world. There came a moment in the dreadful, hurried midst of it when Old Doc looked across the room at Doctor Willie with a queer expression in his eyes. He did not stop what he was doing; his hands moved steadily and skillfully, but in his eyes there was a mist of sad wonder. Why had his old friend to suffer like this? What would the children and Henry do without her? He'd heard there was a mortgage—this illness would make things hard for all of them—

And at this point he looked at Willie, as if for understanding. But there was a sort of exultation in Willie's face. This was an operation a man might not have the privilege of performing more than once or twice in a lifetime. His eyes glittered with an intense interest. No sentimental sadness in Willie's eyes! His lips were tight and cool. He watched his father critically and sharply, and he nodded once. The old man certainly had something of a knack—he'd admit that. Diagnosis rather remarkable, too. But why should he sweat like that? And his face was gray, too. Getting old, probably. It was a good thing he was there to help. . . .

And in Old Doc's mind, as he later watched Willie making a clean, exact suture, there was a sort of painful admiration. "Cool as steel," he thought. He felt very humble before Willie in that moment.

In less than two years Willie had two-thirds of their cases. Our trust in him was amazing, considering that he had



HE SWEEPED OFF THE WRECK OF AN OLD BLACK-VELT HAT

grown up under our noses. But there was about him a sort of aura of infallibility. And the bedside manner helped a lot. Besides, Willie undoubtedly had great ability. He worked tremendously, with satisfaction and gusto. He loved being a doctor. He was never troubled by any sort of doubt whatsoever. Human beings were to him either actual or prospective patients on whom to practice the newest discoveries of the science of medicine and surgery. Pain was merely a symptom, nothing to wince before, to be alleviated if so indicated, if not, to be ignored.

Old Doc and he argued about this sometimes at first, as well as about other things. Old Doc loved these arguments. He was so proud of the quick, sure movements of Willie's mind. Sometimes he pretended an ignorance of something he had long since learned through experience or intuition, merely for the happiness of having Willie talk to him. But after a while they seldom argued or discussed their cases. There were several reasons for this. Willie was constantly busy, and after a while he came unconsciously to absorb something of our attitude toward his father—he was all right, of course, but he was getting old. He was a bit behind the times. Well enough for him to take the lighter cases, of course, but he was hardly up to the complicated and difficult ones.

It was very gradual, of course, Old Doc's dropping out of the firing line, so to speak. At first Willie took the light ailments and most of the far-off ones—the old man had had enough of driving half the night in all sorts of weather, Willie said, truthfully. For the first two years or so he and his father took the difficult cases jointly, and for the most part in complete harmony. This was probably the happiest time of Old Doc's life. Then, gradually, more and more of us acquired the habit of asking for Willie to attend us, not because we really believed he could do better by us than Old Doc, but because he was young, he exhaled modernity, and

his bedside manner gratified us so subtly.

In a way, Old Doc was rather glad to give up. He was tired. It sometimes seemed to him, though, that his soul was more tired than his body. Physically he was a rugged, hale old man. But his soul had been strained and battered by the years of long-drawn-out work, by the sufferings that had made him suffer, by the secrets he held safe in his heart, by being alone. Now, more and more each year there was time to sit on the back porch, to read, to dig in his beautiful garden, to gossip with his neighbors. Sometimes they would call out to him as they passed where he sat with his pipe in the sun:

"Pretty soft, Doc, I'll say!"

And he would reply, with his friendly smile, "Yes, siree—pretty soft!"

He had what was marked on the door as office hours—an hour or two during which he sat in his cluttered old "surgery," Willie having had a wing built on for his own reception room with the latest magazines and fumed-oak chairs, and a glittering consultation room that was aseptic to an inhuman degree, but fewer and fewer patients made their way around the side of the house to the surgery door.

So Old Doc had plenty of time at last to indulge in those genial human contacts he had always delighted in. He fell easily into the habit of spending the afternoons, and sometimes the evenings, sitting in the drug store with two or three of his old friends who, like himself, had been in one way or another superseded. In summer the drug store was cool and smelled of sponges and wet floor behind the soda counter, and in winter it was cozy and warm. Through its windows could be seen and commented upon the somewhat monotonous passing show of our town. There were prodigious arguments, encyclopædic in their range, stories—sometimes Rabelaisian—and long, dull, comfortable silences. One never felt quite out of things in the drug store. The habit grew

on Old Doc until it possessed his body if not his soul.

What happened to him then is what happens to a stanch ship tied to a dock and neglected. Barnacles and decay. The strong frame of Old Doc stiffened and sagged, his muscles grew flabby, there were days when his eyes were misty or dull. He was scarcely conscious of any particular change in himself, for his mind went on actively assorting, appraising, and sifting the knowledge and wisdom he had gathered in his years of hard work. It would have astonished his fellow cronies, it would have astonished Willie most of all, if you had pointed out to them that the soul and mind of Old Doc were like embers glowing under ashes. At the core of him he was so alive that sometimes a pang of incredulous dismay chilled him when the realization came to him of his idle hands. He would go on feeling these instants of dismay at longer and longer intervals until the barnacles and decay of his body extinguished the glowing ember of his mind.

Then came the war. Almost from the first Willie panted to be in it. His ambition was inflamed by the thought of what that colossal opportunity would do for him. He thought of the experience, the great surgeons he might work under. And then, when we were finally in it, he had the crowning incentive of his country. He told Old Doc the next day that he was going to bend every effort to get to France.

They were standing on the steps outside the surgery door. The announcement was not unexpected, but there flashed up into the father's eyes for a second an expression of anguish—the human cry. Then it passed and he looked keenly into Willie's eyes.

"Think they need you, son?"

"I suppose they'll need all the good surgeons they can get," admitted Willie, "and it's an experience I can't afford to miss. There are a lot of things I want to try out that I'll never get a chance at here. I feel as if I've *got* to go!"

"Yes, I suppose you do feel that way." Old Doc turned toward the door. "I heard to-day that Nash"—he was our homœopath—"is trying to get into the Y. If he goes, it will leave us sort of shorthanded around here, won't it?"

Willie made an impatient gesture of one shoulder. "Folks will have to look out for themselves and sacrifice something for their country, won't they?"

Old Doc went into the surgery and closed the door. He looked about him. He seemed to see for the first time the dust and disorder of disuse, as if it symbolized the rust in his own mind and body. A swift dread and rebellion swept over him, a terror of that which was being put back upon his shoulders. He was old, he was tired, he had let go. He had a vision of what he was facing. In the town, in the country for miles around, he would probably be the only doctor. The younger ones would want to go as much as Willie did. Once more it would be up to him. He would have to work, to drive himself as he had done for years before Willie took hold. But then there had been the zest, the consolation of working for Willie's sake as well as for those who depended solely on him. Now there would be nothing but hard duty. And there would be with him night and day the fear of what might be happening to Willie in France.

Old Doc had then one dreadful moment of panic. He wanted to rush out to Willie, put it all before him, beg him to give up and stay home. He wanted, dreadfully, to put his head down on Willie's shoulder, to tell him that he was old and tired, to tell him that he was not the sort of doctor Willie was, and never had been; that he had the weakness of pity; that there were things about the practice of medicine he hated; that he wasn't strong, like Willie; that all these years he had been kept going by something—something in him he didn't understand, only it wasn't what Willie had—genius, love of his profession. He had always felt too much, seen too much beyond his profession, while Willie had

the strength of hardness, of the single eye. Willie was wonderful, like a polished tool, while he was nothing but a compassionate blunderer.

He wanted, dreadfully, to pour all this out to Willie. But he stood still in the middle of the quiet room. And time passed, only a moment or two. Then he dropped heavily into the swivel chair that had a piece of Brussels carpet with large, faded red roses tacked across the worn-out cane of the seat. The chair creaked in a familiar voice. Old Doc opened a drawer absently. A disorderly army of little bottles clinked together and the smell of stale drugs and dust came out. He twirled the chair once or twice, flapped the dust from the top of his medicine case with his black-felt hat.

"Got to get into the harness again," he sighed.

That winter was a bad one. From the very beginning of it we were icebound. It snowed until our homes became igloos. Fuel ran low, the cold seeped into our frame houses. Grippe and pneumonia cases multiplied until we were all badly frightened. We looked now at Old Doc with a terrified conviction that he was all that stood between us and an untimely taking off. For Doctor Willie had gone; Doctor Nash followed on his heels two months later; old Doctor Carey up in the Haines District got badly frostbitten one night and his masterly wife took him to Florida, where he went in for orange growing; two doctors in our nearest neighboring town received commissions and went proudly to the war.

And there was left only Old Doc for a town of two thousand souls and some forty or fifty square miles of farms, and two logging camps. In the autumn, when it was finally sure that Willie was going, Old Doc, with a good deal of humor at his own expense, had learned to drive Willie's little car. He much preferred a horse, but he foresaw that he would never be able to cover the territory without a car, and he could not afford a driver. It became a source of

much exhilarating speculation in the drug store whether Old Doc would not sooner or later succeed in teaching the car to climb a tree, for he drove with a wild, if somewhat shaking, hand, explaining that if he had to put up with the smell of the thing he might as well get some action out of it.

After a while we grew used to seeing Old Doc careening around corners in Doctor Willie's car, his string tie flapping against one ear, his broad shoulders bent over the steering wheel with a sort of whimsical desperation. We took him for granted again. Two hundred or more of us had been down to the train to see Willie off, but I don't think that one of us ever thought of presenting Old Doc with a wrist watch and nineteen pairs of home-knitted socks.

In the spring, just as we were emerging from our snowdrifts, there was an epidemic of typhoid in one of the lumber camps. The mud of the wood roads was so deep that Old Doc wore out two horses that spring. He got an hour or two of sleep now and then in a malodorous bunk house, and he had a good meal at home perhaps every other day. But the medical inspector sent up by the state authorities said that the epidemic was being handled efficiently; it would be better if there were more nurses, but nurses were scarce; he would send one if he could. Then he went away and forgot us.

The next winter was worse, for the influenza ravaged us. If trained nurses were scarce the winter before, they were well-nigh nonexistent now. Although Old Doc had warned us of what was coming, Letha Doane was the only one who went beyond the entertaining first-aid course of six lessons and learned something practical about nursing. Besides her there was one trained nurse and there were two middle-aged women who would "go out nursing," but who liked to sleep in their own beds at night. We had no hospital, although we had six churches. Old Doc learned a way of swearing into his grizzled beard that was

blood-curdling. It was quite early in the course of our troubles that he went into the home of Mrs. Grantley, whose husband was president of the bank, and used this accomplishment. The Grantley child was ill with the measles, and Mrs. Grantley had cornered the one trained nurse. Old Doc came out of the house in four minutes, accompanied by the nurse. That night he went to a meeting of our Red Cross chapter, where he made his one and only public speech.

"Ladies, I want help. I want volunteer nurses, I want cooked food and hot soup for sick families, I want automobiles to take it around, I want bed linen. What are you going to do about it?"

Before he left that meeting he had organized us for mutual help as we had never been organized before. We told one another that Old Doc surprised us; we had never dreamed he had executive ability of that sort.

He turned Doctor Willie's new wing of the house into a small hospital, put in charge of it the one trained nurse, and under her we "spelled" one another at cooking, scrubbing, and nursing; he organized the Boy Scouts to carry hot soup and clean linen to families completely submerged by the epidemic; he seized upon the less supine of us and taught us things about nursing we should have taught ourselves before.

In between these activities he traveled incessantly over roads that were first deep in mud, then frozen hummocks of iron, which in turn gave way to drifted snow or sheets of treacherous ice. The car was no use now, and he went back to a horse. In front of his house there was always a row of battered cars or blanketed horses waiting their masters, who sat in Old Doc's surgery waiting for him to come in so that they could bear him off with them to their stricken households. Some of these were miles away up some snow-choked valley, and often the call came when Old Doc had just fallen into bed after a fifteen-hour day. But he never refused to go.

Sometimes, at first, when he was

starting out on his night rounds, he would glance in at the drug-store window as he drove past. Between the red and the green lights he could see the rosy cheeks of the stove, and Jason Wright and Elmer Candee with their chairs tipped back and the light of some risible bit of gossip in their faces. For an instant he would feel the strong tug of an impulse to go in, to slump down in an armchair, to get warm, to put off for a few minutes the intolerable burden he carried.

But he was scarcely aware of this impulse as he slapped the reins smartly down on his horse's back and went on, for, though his body was tired, now his spirit was in fighting fettle. Sometimes, driving along through the icy night alone, no other live thing in sight, no light except a tiny lamp in some far-off farmhouse window, he would have a famous talk with Willie. He would brag a bit to Willie. And above the deadly weariness of his body his spirit would rise up gayly, warm and exultant. He was shoulder to shoulder with Willie, three thousand miles away.

These were the fine moments of that time. But they came less and less frequently as the clutch of winter and the epidemic fastened tighter upon him. His brain grew foggy with fatigue and sleepless nights. He wondered sometimes if he could hold out until spring. Perhaps by that time Willie would be home—if only he could hold out.

Then one sleety night in March it seemed as if the peak of his endurance was reached. When he drove into his barn door at ten o'clock that night he knew that he was nearly finished. He had been called at six that morning to a settlement ten miles up Cedar Valley. Twenty-two new cases of influenza in six families. Not a nurse. Raw, new frame houses around a sawmill, with the damp, bitter wind blowing in at the cracks. Old Doc worked all day, then drove on to the next town, abducted a nurse, packed the back of his buggy with supplies and drugs and an extra stove

for a family with seven children and one heater, installed these articles, put the settlement under the iron rule of the nurse, and long after dark started homeward.

Sitting humped over the reins, he swayed sometimes from side to side with fatigue, or dropped asleep until the lurch of the wheels slewing into a rut aroused him. The horse plodded on with his head lowered before the occasional sleety blasts. The raw cold came up through the floor boards of the buggy, and Old Doc's legs turned to ice. His thoughts became confused and blurred, and again they turned as clear as crystal. In the second lumber camp a man had died the day before from the measles, and Old Doc knew what that meant. Grown-up men with the measles, and men in a camp, at that, he thought, were ornery things to handle. They'd die on his hands if he didn't nip the thing in the bud. For a few minutes his mind worked clearly as he planned his campaign. Then it grew foggy again. He was conscious only of his benumbing, aching weariness. If he could just get one good night's sleep, if he could once get warm again—

The horse turned of its own volition into the drive to the stable. Old Doc was just able to lower himself out of the buggy and stagger to the kitchen door.

"Mother, telephone over to Andy to come over and put up the horse," he said to his wife. "I'm—all—in."

He fell onto the Turkey-red covered couch near the kitchen stove and was instantly asleep. His wife had got his wet boots off and was ladling warm soup between his lips with a spoon when the surgery bell rang. She answered it. A tall young man in a soaked mackinaw stood on the threshold.

"Is the doctor here?" he asked, with a nervous tremor in his voice.

"Yes, but he can't go out again. He's pretty near sick himself."

"But we've got to have him! It's my wife. I dunno but she's dying—we

didn't expect the baby so soon. She's in turrible pain—"

His eyes were shining with terror. The doctor's wife twisted her apron in indecision, and at that instant the doctor himself walked in in his stocking feet. The man in the mackinaw caught hold of his arm and poured out his story frantically.

It seemed to Old Doc that every atom of his body and mind quivered and rebelled. From the details he knew this was going to be a bad case. Even in favorable circumstances he had never liked confinement cases. And this one was going to be, in all probability, complicated. If only he had had a night's rest! A qualm of sick distaste swept over him. Then he sat down and began pulling on the dry boots that were always kept behind the surgery stove.

"Make me a bottle of coffee, Mother," he said. "And make her strong."

An hour's drive through the sleet, with the man in the mackinaw sitting forward pushing on the reins, and Old Doc sleeping with his head rolling on his chest. A little new frame house set in the midst of a raw, new farm hacked out of a hillside of second-growth timber. In the kitchen Old Doc shook himself out of his wet great-coat while an anxious woman—a neighbor from the nearest house two miles away—explained what she had done.

He went through the living room into a small bedroom, passing a bed in the corner where were two children asleep.

"Hers?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the neighbor woman.

Old Doc bent over the bed while the neighbor woman held the kerosene lamp. The woman on the bed tried to smother her groans and looked up at him out of young blue eyes.

After a time the doctor came out of the bedroom. The husband had come in and was hanging over the stove, shaking with cold and fear.

"Why in God's name didn't you bring her to me before?" Old Doc inquired.

"She was goin' down to see you to-

morrow. We—we—the other children come all right. We thought—we didn't know—"

Old Doc cut him short with an angry gesture and turned toward the door into the kitchen. The husband started dumbly to follow him.

"Stay there!" commanded Old Doc, curtly, and shut himself alone into the kitchen.

He had to think. He had to decide what to do. There wasn't much time, for whatever was done must be done before the woman reached exhaustion. He told himself he had to decide, and yet deep in his brain he knew there was no choice. He had known before his examination was completed that there was only one course indicated—the oldest operation in the world, in some ways the simplest, and to him the most terrible—the Cæsarian section.

He had seen it performed once in a great operating room with tier on tier looking on, and at that time a horror which he could not rid himself of had seized him. He had told himself that if ever he had to bring life into the world that way, he would turn his patient over to another surgeon. It was a dread without reason or justification, he knew. He had once spoken about it to Willie, and Willie had smiled. Willie would have gone to it eagerly, regarding it as a valuable experience.

Old Doc walked up and down the kitchen. He saw so many things that he didn't want to see—two pairs of small shoes drying behind the stove, a needle stuck into the hem of a baby's garment, a woman's checked-gingham apron thrown over a chair, the remains of a meager supper on the table. They were poor; they were having a struggle. They were both of them young.

"No business bringing another child into their poverty," he thought, angrily thrusting aside a chair as he walked. "Ignorant, not even clean. . . . Impossible to be sure of asepsis. . . . Ought to have expert help. . . . Not even light enough. . . . My God! I can't do it!"

He went to stand by the window, looking out into the blackness of the country night. His mind worked clearly and cleanly. He went through the operation, step by step. In good conditions, with trained assistance at his elbow, with the time properly chosen, it was not a particularly difficult or dangerous operation. Perfect asepsis, perfect after-care. That was all.

All! Old Doc saw with his mind's eye again the small bedroom, the smoky oil lamp, the primitive conditions, the frightened face of the neighbor woman. And another thing he saw—if he did this operation and a double fatality ensued, his name would be a hissing and a by-word. He would be condemned without a hearing. He would be perfectly justified in not attempting it, under the existing conditions. No one could expect him to perform this operation alone, in bad conditions, at the possible risk of his professional name.

Well, then, what was there to do? Something seemed to stand at his elbow, very close. A voice was in his ear. He could proceed as in a normal delivery. These ignorant persons would never know that there was another course possible. After all, it was their fault. They had neglected to come to him in time. And then—what? The woman would die. He knew to the last detail how dreadfully she would die.

A shudder, a wave of nausea, swept over him. Blindly he opened the door and stepped out into the darkness.

The sleety rain had ceased. The night was rapidly turning colder. Near the kitchen door there was a tall hemlock, its trunk gleaming and dark with frozen rain. Old Doc stumbled toward it and leaned against it as if it were a friend. For a second he was conscious only of the fact that he was an old man, tired out, finished. He wished that he could lie down there at the foot of the tree, in the wet and snowy dark, close his eyes, and slip into his long rest.

Leaning against the tree, he did, in fact, close his eyes. But with them closed

he saw much more than he had seen with them open. He saw the two pairs of small shoes behind the kitchen stove, and he saw the young blue eyes of the mother, full of agony. He took off his old felt hat and beat it against the tree, in a sort of agony of his own.

The whacking sound of the hat against the tree seemed to pull him up sharply from his dazed and weary rebellion. He stood still, looking straight ahead of him. He was talking to Willie. It seemed to him that the two of them were waiting for the summons to advance. It was on the eve of a great attack, and he and Willie were going up together. They were not Old Doc and young Doctor Willie, but they were equals, in age, in strength, in audacity. He saw Willie's face quite plainly, eager, tight-lipped, and he lifted his own face with a smile.

Only a second or two of time, but years in effect. As an old garment, weariness and self-distrust dropped from him. He felt light and strong. Down to his finger tips the strange current coursed; out of the darkness it seeped into him; on the breath of the wet night air blowing down from the mountain it entered his body. He was as young as Willie, and he was stronger than Willie would ever be. The signal had been given and he was going over the top.

Old Doc turned himself about and leaped toward the house.

"Build up this fire!" he issued crisp orders. "Let me have plenty of hot water. Bring all the lamps in the house. Clean those dirty chimneys. Man alive, brace up! There's one big chance and we're going to take it. Now, then, first of all, to clear the decks. . . ."

Sometime in the middle of the next day—or perhaps, so far as Old Doc knew, it was the day after—he climbed heavily, stumblingly into the buggy and was driven toward home. Almost as soon as he struck the seat he was asleep, his head rolling on his chest, his face gray. In the house he had just left there

was a new soul, and one other emerging slowly, steadily from the shadows of the borderland.

The speaker of the day had reached his peroration. Through the golden quiet of the afternoon his words fell on all the upturned faces and rang from one side of the Square to the other. His words were flowery and flamboyant, but sincere and touching to us with our eyes upon that line of young faces all held at attention. He recited again their deeds, their sacrifices, their glory.

Then, as he rounded his last paragraph, made his last soaring gesture, the band burst into a triumphant martial strain, the rope was pulled that drew away the folds of the flag, and the bronze tablet in the face of the bowlder was revealed. They were all there, the little names that were so big in our hearts, imperishably graven, given over forever to the glory they deserved.

The packed throng, cheering, pressed forward to read. The band shattered the air with triumph. With tears and shining faces the hands of our boys were seized and wrung. The rest of the program was lost in the greatness of the moment.

Old Doc leaned forward from the drug-store steps. He was not looking at the bronze tablet, but at the squared shoulders, the firm profile of his son. Then for a moment he lost them, for Doctor Willie became temporarily the center of a large swirl of friends who wished to shake his hand. The band blared, cheer after cheer went up.

And over the face of Doctor Willie's father there came a change of expression. The loneliness in it gave place to a fine, serene light. There was a bit of humor in it, the least bit of a rueful lift to one ragged eyebrow. But, as if unconsciously, his shoulders squared themselves proudly. He swept off the wreck of an old black-felt hat as the flag was run up above the bronze tablet. Then he went back smiling to his arm-chair in the drug store.

